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Issue 2 (2010) - Memory

'A memorie nourished by images': Reforming the Art of Memory in William Fowler's *Tarantula of Love*

Elizabeth Elliott

[1] The manuscripts containing the works of William Fowler (1560-1612), Scottish Jacobean courtier and poet, who ended his days as Secretary to Queen Anna of Denmark, present an intriguing juxtaposition of a draft sonnet associated with his sequence, *The Tarantula of Love*, and a love letter in his hand. Appearing above the sonnet on the recto of a sheet of paper, the letter runs as follows:

My faire and sweit harte gif I wer assured that your inward conditionns wer ansuerable to your untoward beautye, I wald have adventured to wryte mair particularlie vnto yow then I can or will att this houer, be reasoun my trustie servant reported vnto me that ye did say to him that ye culd not wryte and I wald be laith to be so far scorned or humbled that my wryting war red by any other ene then be your awen quhase brightnes hes summoned me to love you, nor by any other hands ~~fingers answered~~ [...] then be theme that a far aff I have Indurd of there plesantnes. sua gif it sal stand with your plesour to lat me see the farder proofs of your perfection I will be mair plane in my nixt letters and how euer it be sal rest your maist honest and vnfeind friend to honour you [1].

A revised version of the accompanying sonnet, 'It is thy plat and course o Mightye Love', appears elsewhere in Fowler's papers (Hawthornden MS XI, f. 23v). Cancelled in this manuscript, the revised sonnet was excluded from the second, and most authoritative, version of the *Tarantula*, preserved in the Drummond MS (Edinburgh University Library, De.3.68; for a detailed account of the MSS, see Verweij 2007). Perhaps simply the effect of a convenient use of blank space, the conjunction of letter and sonnet might alternatively suggest the autobiographical nature of the passion depicted within the *Tarantula*, or an abandoned direction for Fowler's literary project, as a heterogeneous work encompassing a variety of forms and evoking the processes of textual circulation, rather than a sonnet cycle (for an analysis of one such text, Isabella Whitney's *A Sweet Nosgay*, see Wall 1991: 47-48). Yet, if the precise nature of the connection between letter and sonnet remains uncertain, their shared function as forms of erotic petition is indicative: Fowler's letter articulates concerns that are also central to the *Tarantula*, and the treatment of desire in these interlinked texts illuminates the later sequence of seventy-one sonnets, most probably composed between 1584 and 1587 (Verweij 2007).

[2] In voicing a desire for tangible proof of the beloved's perfection, for evidence that her beauty is an authentic sign of her inward worth, Fowler articulates an impossible longing for direct access to truth. Composed despite the apparently conclusive report of his 'trustie' servant, the letter conceives writing as a medium that might serve as a substitute for its author's physical presence, as the object of the beloved's gaze, and of her touch. In framing his request in terms of a wish for visible proof, Fowler's letter suggests a paradoxical attempt to dispute the information he has received. It implies a hope for an answer in the lady's hand, rather than for confirmation of her ability to read. Transforming the intimacy that belongs to the personal letter into a distasteful exposure of private sentiment, the beloved's putative lack strikes at the heart of his desire because it renders her imperfect. As such, the addressee is an unsuitable object for a mode of loving that characteristically identifies the beloved as the embodiment of all that is desirable, a being who resembles Christian and Neo-Platonic conceptions of the divine in her completeness: as the accompanying sonnet expresses it, one 'on quhome the heavens hes steld / attains all that which sondrie hes in part' (Meikle, Craigie, and Purves 1914-40: I. 209, ll. 9-10; hereafter Meikle). In Fowler's letter, the hope that writing might operate as a material support

enabling the lover to approach such perfection is not only deferred, but already forlorn, as the anxious request for reassurance reflects an awareness that his desire is misdirected, and that the medium in which it finds expression will prove inadequate. If the lady lacks the skill to write, her perfection cannot be proven, and Fowler's desire cannot be satisfied; if she is unable to read, writing cannot serve as a means to achieve intimacy, as others will be made party to their correspondence. Fowler's *Tarantula* displays a similar preoccupation with human artifice and its potential as a means to obtain the ends of desire. This article seeks to locate Fowler's sequence against the background of contemporary debates surrounding the relationship between practices of representation, the training and exercise of the faculty of memory, and the government of desire.

[3] Fowler's own proficiency in the art of memory, the systematic mental training that facilitated the storage, retrieval, and creative recombination of ideas and information, is indicated by the presence of an 'art of memorye' in the list headed 'My Works', preserved amongst the Hawthornden papers. Although no such work survives, his manuscripts offer some further evidence of an interest in mnemonic praxis: a page of jottings includes a sentence in which Fowler addresses James VI, recollecting that 'Whils I was teaching your majestie the art of me[m]orye yow instructed me in poesie and imprese for so was yours. *sic docens discam*' (Meikle, II. 1; III. XIX n. 4). 'Thus by teaching I shall learn': the same Latin tag appears in James's 'Sonnet of the authour to the reader', printed in the *Essayes of a Prentise in the Divine Art of Poesie* (1584), and Fowler's tantalising claim underlines the complementary nature of the arts of poetry, memory, and emblem (Craigie I.69, l. 12).

[4] Fowler's interest in emblems, reflected in his design for the ceremonial at the baptism of Prince Henry, in surviving notes on *impresa*, and in the title of another lost work, the 'art of impreses', has been remarked by Michael Bath, who elsewhere draws attention to the symbiotic relationship linking emblematics and the art of memory (Bath 2007; Bath 1994: 48-51). Traditional memory systems involved the visualisation of a series of places where data, translated into the form of images, might be arranged and stored (Yates 1966; Carruthers 2008). As a practice that entails the generation of figures capable of expressing complex meanings, the art of memory anticipated the later emergence of emblematics. The definition of the art of memory offered by Francis Bacon serves as an index of the extent to which the two practices shape and inform one another: Bacon uses the term emblem as a label encompassing the conversion of data into images central to the art of memory, finding that 'Embleme reduceth conceits intellectuall to Images sensible, which strike the Memorie more' (Bacon 2000: 119; on the relationship between memory and emblem, see also Fowler 1999: 8-9).

[5] Fowler's apparent interest in forms of memory-training that employ images is especially intriguing because his activities brought him into proximity with Giordano Bruno, who was to become one of the key figures in a controversy surrounding this aspect of the art of memory. Detained by the English authorities whilst in London during 1582, Fowler presently became one of Walsingham's agents, cultivating an acquaintance with the French ambassador, Michel de Castelnau, seigneur de Mauvissière, which earned him the displeasure of his family and of his connections in the Kirk of Scotland (Meikle, III. xvi-xix). Fowler was a regular visitor to the ambassador's house at Salisbury Court until his return to Scotland, with his last dispatch to Walsingham from London dated 8 July 1583; it is therefore likely that he came into contact with Bruno, resident at the embassy from April 1583. If such contact remains a matter for speculation, however, the dispute in which Bruno was to become embroiled the following year provides an insight into the tensions surrounding the practice of the art of memory within a culture in the grip of religious reform.

[6] The controversy over the uses of memory in 1584 emanates from the wider conflict over the role of visual representation shaping reformed ideology. Conducted within a series of tracts published by Bruno's Scottish disciple, Alexander Dicson, and G. P., who has been persuasively identified with the Puritan divine and Ramist William Perkins, the debate sets the traditional use of places and images as a support to memory in opposition to a form of

the art of memory derived from the teachings of Pierre de la Ramée (Ramus), founded upon logical disposition (Yates 1966: 260-78; Durkan 1962). In her groundbreaking study, Frances Yates locates the Ramist rejection of the traditional methods of memory-training against the background of a Protestant repudiation of devotional images, finding that Ramism 'provided a kind of inner iconoclasm, corresponding to the outer iconoclasm' (Yates 1966: 231). Yates's analysis anticipates the highly influential reading of the impact of Protestantism upon English culture proposed by Patrick Collinson. Collinson identifies the 1580s as marking a radical shift from an iconoclasm that distinguished between acceptable and unacceptable images, between the aesthetic and the devotional, to iconophobia, inimical to art and engendering 'a society suffering from severe visual anorexia' (Collinson 1988: 119). Recent work has cast doubt on this model, however, drawing attention to a more complex process of transition in attitudes to the visual within reformed society, encompassing the creative assimilation and adaptation of inherited visual and material culture (Hamling and Williams 2007; Watt 1991). By illuminating the impact of Protestantism on visual imagery, such studies facilitate critical reflection on the issues at stake in the debate surrounding the art of memory in 1584, and their significance for an interpretation of Fowler's poetry.

[7] The Ramist emphasis on logical order as the foundation of good mnemonic practice does not entail a complete rejection of the visual: Ramist methodology employs structures conceived in spatial terms, stimulating the production of printed diagrams in a development that accentuates and enlarges the traditional function of page layout as a material supplement to memory, or cognitive prosthesis (Hallett 2007; Ong 2004; Tribble 2008; Yates 1966: 230). Perkins's attack on the traditional art of memory is specifically concerned with the use of images that appeal to the emotions in order to stimulate recollection, a criticism repeated in the preaching manual published under his own name in 1592, and later translated into English as *The Arte of Prophecyng*: 'The animation of the image, which is the key of memory, is impious; because it requireth absurd, insolent and prodigious cogitations, and those especially, which set an edge vpon and kindle the most corrupt affections of the flesh' (1607: 130). An emphasis on the affective character of memory images is a standard feature of writing on traditional forms of the art of memory, reflecting the origins of such images in sensory experience, and the fundamental role attributed to the emotional response as a means of imprinting and retrieving data in the memory (Carruthers 2008: 75-76, 217). The *Antidicsonus* of 1584 identifies a more particular cause of disquiet, however, in an allusion to Peter of Ravenna (Pietro Tommai) as an advocate of licentious images (Yates 1966: 267). A highly popular treatise on memory, Peter's Phenix was first published in Venice, 1491, and an English translation 'out of French' was printed in London c. 1545 (Phenix, sig. B8v; Rossi 2000: 20-22, 254 n47). Peter illustrates his art of memory with examples of his own use of the image of Juniper, a Pistoian whom he 'loved greatly' as a young man, and of various 'fayre maidens', some of them 'all naked'. He advises the reader that these images are useful to him 'for they excite greatly my mynde and frequentation', but warns that the method is inappropriate for those who despise women (sig. A7r-A7v, B2v).

[8] If the use of the female form as a mnemonic focus is a source of particular anxiety for Perkins, however, the relationship between Peter's apparently libidinous and practical art of memory and the more mystical form disseminated by Bruno and Dicson is difficult to quantify. Recent work has questioned the assumption that Bruno's attitude to the Protestant Reformation was wholly hostile: of particular interest here are the philosopher's repudiation of devotional practices involving images, and the emphasis placed on his refusal to accept Mariolatry or veneration of the saints in a report issued shortly after his death in 1600, at the hands of the Inquisition (Gatti 2002). A further indication that the Brunian version of the art of memory was not necessarily incompatible with Protestantism is provided by Dicson's sixteenth-century reputation as a former attendant on Philip Sidney. Bruno dedicated two of his works to Sidney, whose conception of the art of memory was, on the evidence of an allusion in the Defence of Poetry, traditional rather than Ramist (Yates

1966: 275-77; Durkan 1962). Moreover, Perkins's suspicion of the construction of inward images coexisted with other Puritan traditions endorsing the cultivation of mental pictures in devotional meditation, with such images perceived as a wholesome contrast to the material objects formerly displayed in places of worship (Moore 2006).

[9] Bruno's own writings reflect a profound distrust of the erotic: especially significant is his *De gli eroici furori* (c. 1585), dedicated to Sidney. The *furori* reads Petrarch's *Canzoniere* as a depiction of the harmful effects of sensual love, and enacts a creative adaptation of the sonnet sequence form to frame a philosophical enquiry, a search for truth (Gatti 2007). Bruno's text is organized as a series of dialogues, arranged in sections that typically consist of a visual device described in words and without pictorial illustration; a poem, usually a sonnet, in which the emblematic imagery takes the form of a literary conceit; and a commentary expounding the significance of the image in spiritual terms. For example, an emblem comprising stars as eyes, accompanied by the motto *Mors et vita*, is matched with a sonnet that imagines the beloved's eyes as stars, whose glance is fatal, yet also grants the lover a reprieve from death. The meaning of the two is linked in a commentary that glosses the image as a metaphor for the soul's longing for God, and the conventional amatory petition of the sonnet is expounded as a plea for a vision of God that is not mediated by similitudes or veiled in mystery. This vision is identified with 'eternal life, which a man may anticipate in this life and enjoy in eternity' (Part 2, Dialogue 1, VII; Bruno 1889: 30). As Frances Yates argues, in this respect, Bruno's treatment of Petrarch resembles that of the emblematisers who mined the *Canzoniere* for images to be reinvented as sacred emblems (Yates 1943). The strong connections between the arts of memory and emblem suggest that such traditions function to reinscribe Petrarchan tropes as memory images. In doing so, Bruno and the emblematisers may be responding to Petrarch's reputation as a master of the art of memory: regularly cited as such in sixteenth-century treatises, Petrarch is also mentioned as an authority on memory by Perkins, in another work against Dicson published in 1584, the *Libellus de memoria verissimaque bene recordandi scientia* (Yates 1966: 109-12, 267, 303; Rossi 2000: 227-28).

[10] In witnessing the particular anxieties surrounding the role of images, the affective, and, especially, the erotic, in the art of memory as it was practised in the 1580s, the interaction between Bruno, Dicson, and Perkins offers a valuable insight into the tensions mediated within Fowler's Tarantula. The possibility that Fowler was aware of this debate cannot be ruled out, but his earlier work suggests that he already shared the concerns at its heart. The question of the proper use of images had a personal dimension for Fowler, whose first publication, printed in Edinburgh, 1581, has its origins in a theological debate with violent consequences. In Paris continuing his studies, Fowler became party to a discussion of the Jesuit John Hay's new book, *Certain demandes concerning the Christian religion and discipline proposed to the ministers of the new pretended Kirk of Scotland* (1580), in a group of his compatriots that also included Hay himself (Meikle, II. 22). According to Fowler, the flashpoint that tipped this 'prolix disputation' into threats of physical violence was the success of his own counterargument against the proposition that the making of images is not contrary to divine law, because representation is to be distinguished from worship. For his pains, Fowler claims, he was subjected to a bloody public beating at the hands of his Catholic countrymen shortly thereafter (Meikle, II. 23-25). In *An Answer to the Calumnious letter and Erroneous propositions of an apostat named M. Io. Hammiltoun*, Fowler responds to a letter sent by one of his assailants, John Hamilton, in a challenge to the ministers of the Kirk of Scotland. Apparently written at the ministers' request, Fowler's *Answer* is nonetheless framed by an account of his personal grievance, and his arguments clarify his stance on images to some extent.

[11] Fowler allows for a distinction between ornamental and devotional imagery, arguing that 'Christe him selfe did not condemne Cæsars Image in the money. For painting & grauing ar things indifferent nather guid nor euil, in sa far, that quhen thair vse tends not to deuotioun bot to decoratioun and ornament. Bot euin sua, that God can not be representit be

na Image' (Meikle, II. 56). This would seem to leave substantial scope for artistic representation, and perhaps reflects the particular cultural climate of early modern Scotland, where Protestant iconoclasm coexists with a flourishing tradition of decorative painting (Bath 2003). Fowler's later comments on devotional objects, however, suggest that the relationship between memory and images is a focus of anxiety:

ze esteem them as books of the Laics & commoun pepill, be the quhilks they are callit to remembrance to serue Christ. Bot an vnhappy memorie is that quhilk stands in nead of a sightfull conceat, and miserabill is that man quhilk na vtherwayis can haue the presence of Christ with him vnles he haue his Image paintit on the wall, or expressit in sum vther mater, for sic a memorie that is nourished by Images procedeth not of harty loue: bot of necessitie of eye sight. (Meikle, II. 57-58)

Fowler's emphasis on the inadequacy of a memory reliant upon material prompts is perhaps intended to suggest the value of the capacity for the contemplation of mental, rather than physical, objects, making a distinction like that found in the Puritan traditions described by Susan Hardman Moore (2006). Yet Fowler's distrust of the nourishment that eyesight provides for the memory undermines the basis of any such distinction. Traditional forms of the art of memory underline the visual qualities of mental images, emphasising the role of sight in the creation of foci for meditation; in contrast, Fowler's analysis of the question of devotional objects suggests that reliance on the visual sense is in itself problematic.

[12] The tensions aroused by the confluence of the art of memory and the iconoclastic tendencies at work within Protestantism cast new light on Sarah Dunnigan's subtle argument that 'Fowler's erotic poetry can be conceived as a mirror image of his 1581 polemical Epistle' (Dunnigan 2002: 163). Reading the *Tarantula* as the expression of a form of Protestant revisionism directed towards Petrarchan tradition, Dunnigan traces a poetic sequence in dialogue with Petrarch's *Canzoniere*, and its concluding invocation to the Virgin Mary. As she argues, within Fowler's erotic poetry, 'the feminine is identified as the locus of sin and an idolatrous object of abject adoration', and the *Tarantula* mediates the complex interplay between ideas of Catholicism, the feminine, and the love sonnet within early modern Scotland, shaped by the experience of Marian rule and its aftermath (Dunnigan 2002: 150; on idolatry in the *Canzoniere*, see also Roche 1989). Against this background, Fowler's *Tarantula* functions as a setting where the anxieties provoked by the contested role of the Virgin as intercessor, and of material images of Mary as supports to the memories of Christian subjects in devout meditation, come into contact with the profound disquiet aroused by the affective aspects of the art of memory, and especially, by the use of the eroticised female body as a mnemonic device. The *Tarantula*'s revisionary approach to its model perhaps reflects an appropriation of the *Canzoniere* as a means to negotiate the friction between memory and the erotic, not unlike that enacted by Bruno in the *furori*, or his emblematic counterparts.

[13] In the *Tarantula*, the nature of the connection between memory and desire is further refined by another intertextual relationship at work within the sequence: as R. D. S. Jack argues in his pioneering work on Fowler's place in the Scottish sonnet tradition, variations in the speaker's desire for his beloved, Bellisa, evoke the neo-Platonic progression described by Bembo in Book 4 of Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano* (Jack 1970: 488-89; Jack 1972: 84-85). Yet the image of the ladder of love, tracing a movement from sensual passion to a mystical union with the divine, is summoned up only to be undermined, as Fowler throws the workings of Bembo's model into doubt. Fundamental to the advancement of Bembo's ideal loving subject is the action of the faculty of memory, as a means to assuage the pain of separation from the beloved. As Bembo advises:

To avoide therefore the tourment of this absence, and to enjoy beawtie without passion, the Courtier by the helpe of reason muste full and wholly call backe again the coveting of the body to beawtye alone and (in what he can) beehoulde it in it

self simple and pure, and frame it within in his imagination sundred from all matter (Hoby 1900: 357)

Castiglione's text is itself involved in an attempt to neutralise the threat erotic desire poses to the stability of the subject, as the transference of affection to an image framed within the imagination relieves it of the corrupting influence of matter. As Sarah Dunnigan and Sebastiaan Verweij argue, however, in Fowler's sequence, the transition from love of the lady to the love of God is frustrated, and instead gives way to humble pleas for divine grace (Dunnigan 2002; Verweij 2007). The authority of this conclusion to the sequence, expressed in the final two sonnets of the Drummond manuscript, has been obscured by the editorial history of the text, as Verweij demonstrates: unpublished during Fowler's lifetime, the text as reconstructed by its first modern editor, Henry W. Meikle, misidentifies four discarded sonnets from the Hawthornden MSS as an ending to the cycle (Verweij 2007). Recognition of the structure of Fowler's design underlines the stark quality of his conclusion, as the lover acknowledges that he has been seduced by carnal affection, pleading that he had lost 'self and sense' in love in the penultimate sonnet:

though, soverene prence, I have in playning most
bewailed my panis bot not bewaild my sinn,
and so maid sad in me thy holie ghost,
yet drawe my saule from hell that thense doth rin.
this, O Sueit lord, to grant I will begin,
that I have blaikned beutyas lovd and servd,
and hethe adord bot outward bark and skin,
and earthlie things to heunlye hes preferd:
yet let thy mercie the to mercie move,
and off my mortal mak immortal love. (Meikle, I. 206, ll. 2, 5-14)

The lover's former passion is represented as an impious devotion to worldly things, while he himself lacks agency: only divine grace can open his heart to immortal love.

[14] Beauty's failure as a means to evade the impulse of libidinous desire is foreshadowed in the effect of attempts to frame the beloved object in the imagination. During a period of separation occasioned by plague, the lover seeks to assuage the pain of absence through the exercise of memory:

Far from these eyes, and sondred from that face
which with alluring lookes hethe me ortayne,
I move vnmoved, I chainge vnchaingde eache place,
and therbye thinks to mitigat my payne.
and quhils I thus wayes fra your sight remayne,
remembring all the moments that ar past,
yea, euerye houer that I have spent in vayne
in follouing yow quhair 3e have fled als fast,
Vnto this dyell horologe att last
I me compaire, quhaire love the neidile is,
my hart the glass which schawes al grace is past,
the threid my thoughts, the schaddow a reft kiss:
See me quho then wald morning know by noone,
I am the dyell, sirs, and shee the sune. (Meikle, I. 161, ll. 1-14)

Already the hope that memory will serve to relieve pain is weakened, since far from restoring equilibrium to the speaker, reminiscence engenders a vain and ceaseless motion. Rather than sundering him from matter, the action of framing his beloved in the imagination reifies him. Like the sundial, his response to external influence is involuntary, and the image of the heart as 'the glass which schawes al grace is past' sounds an especially ominous note. In the next sonnet, Fowler at once extols memory's capacity for recollection and underlines

its detrimental effects:

I have not yet preaste to escape by flight
 furth of your yok, which nek and fredome boues:
 for ay my thoughts which chainging disavoues,
 trewe secretars of my affections all,
 [...]
 presents your absent schape more me to thrall,
 and in this distance dothe to mynde recall
 your rare perfections and theme right recyte,
 which maks all men in madneß for to fall. (Meikle, I. 162, ll. 3-6, 7-10)

The familiar trope of the prison of love both complements and conceals Fowler's subversion of the Neo-Platonic conceit, as the lover's imprisonment is presented as a matter of free choice. Yet rather than contributing to his liberation from material bondage, reminiscence increases his subjection, while the common mnemonic techniques of cataloguing and recitation produce a general madness. As Fowler concludes, 'so present, absent, I my noyes renewe, / And Fouler rins not Foule to girnis and glewe' (ll. 13-14).

[15] In contrast to Castiglione's idealized courtier, the speaker of Fowler's sequence persistently fails to find consolation in the imaginative power of recollection: as he protests, 'far aff, your face enflams me mair and maire' (Meikle, I. 169, ll. 11). Instead of bringing relief, memory increases the pain of frustrated desire: 'quhils that hee quhome thrist dois sore assayle, / remembring drink, recessis mair his drouthe, / so I remembring the rebreids my bayle' (Meikle, I. 197, ll. 9-11). Nor is the transition that Jack traces within the *Tarantula*, a progressive movement resembling the contemplative journey described by Bembo, as benevolent as its model suggests (Jack 1970: 489). Bellisa is increasingly identified with nature, marking a shift from a contingent experience of love to a generalised affection that embraces the world, yet, as Verweij observes, at the same time 'her destructive powers rage more fearfully than ever' (Verweij 2007: 17). Associated with natural disasters, 'wynds, tempests, haile', and 'vncouth stormes', plagues, floods, and thunder, Bellisa functions as an image of the extremes of worldly mutability, and the speaker's devotion to her reflects an increasing and terrible subjection to matter (Meikle I. 168, ll. 5-6, and sonnets 32-40). Insofar as this development is sequentially linked with the lover's attempts to make use of the faculty of memory to recreate the image of the beloved in absence, Fowler's sequence is in sympathy with Perkins's judgement that such meditative practices 'set an edge vpon and kindle the most corrupt affections of the flesh'.

[16] The opening sonnet of Fowler's sequence frames the problem as it explores a convergence of related impulses at work in memory, literary composition, and sexual reproduction. As a reinterpretation of the first sonnet of Petrarch's *Canzoniere*, Fowler's poem evokes the central message of its original, the theme of worldly transience, as a subtext, even as it develops its source material along new lines (for a recent overview of the influence of Petrarch on the Scottish sonnet, see Jack 2007). This association with transience anticipates the rejection of carnal love that concludes the sequence, and provides a counterpoint for the speaker's hope: 'gif euer flams of love hathe touchte your hart, / I trust with sobbs and teares the same to perse' (Meikle I. 136, ll. 3-4). In the image of the wounded heart, Fowler introduces a figure with strong connections to mnemonic tradition. The heart was conceived as a seat of memory, a sense preserved in the phrase 'to learn by heart', and the metaphor underlines the association between affect and memory. The trope of the piercing of the heart reflects the sense that the process of fixing an impression in the memory might be difficult and painful; it also evokes the widespread use of images of violence in the art of memory, because they stirred up an emotional response, and were therefore inherently more memorable. The 'blodie bloodles wou[n]ds' with which the speaker will 'depaint' his 'ruid rigours' belong to a related tradition, and evoke the popular imagery of late medieval piety (Meikle, I. 136, ll. 5-6). In a familiar trope, the body of Christ was imagined as a manuscript page, whose surface is broken by the strokes of the pen, while

his blood was likened to ink (Carruthers 1998: 99-105). Fowler's imagery recalls the pious meditation that is being displaced by idolatrous carnal love, as the drive towards sexual reproduction supplants the injunction to remember heaven, and those forms of contemplation conceived as a preparation for the life eternal.

[17] Traditionally considered as part of rhetoric, memory continued to be perceived as a tool of literary invention in the early modern period, forging a link between the speaker's production of 'disordred verse' and the effect it is to have on the hearer. Fowler's hearers are to 'sperse' 'there plaints' and 'mak the haggard rocks resound sad sounds', in an image that suggests the contribution that processes of recitation and circulation make to textual reproduction (ll. 7-8). Imagining Fowler's readers as echoing his lines back to Bellisa, the closing couplet of this first sonnet plays on the interrelation between memory, poetry, and sexual reproduction: 'O of this stayles thought the stayed sing / breide him not deathe that glore to the dois bring'. The juxtaposition of 'stayles' and 'stayed' suggests the speaker's frustrated longing for the cessation of desire, for equilibrium, while the image of 'stayles thought' evokes a problem of particular importance to mnemonists. Typically discussed in terms of locational metaphors, the problem of distraction or mental wandering is detrimental to the focus necessary to construct and navigate mental pathways (Carruthers 1998: 82-84). The 'stayles' or, in a deleted alternative, 'wandring' quality of the speaker's thought evokes a mind whose state is mirrored in the 'disordred verse' it produces, where desire functions as a distraction that obstructs the proper ordering of thought and poetry (Drummond MS. f. 1r). Conversely, the prospect of an immortality achieved through textual circulation is presented to Bellisa as an argument persuading her to embrace another form of breeding, the sexual reproduction whose function it shadows, and which might offer at least a temporary satisfaction for the impulse of desire.

[18] As the image of 'disordred verse' suggests, the role of order in the art of memory and its relation to the affective impulse also finds expression in the construction of the *Tarantula* itself. In his revaluation of the manuscripts containing the sequence, Verweij draws attention to the sophistication of Fowler's drafting techniques, and of his editorial practice in organising the sequence. Commenting on the numerous revisions and deletions witnessed by the manuscripts, Verweij argues: 'it is evident that Fowler is feeling his way around his material, often substituting or moving whole lines, and frequently changing rhyme words' (Verweij 2007: 14). Given Fowler's training in the art of memory, this practice is especially significant, since he might instead have chosen to compose poetry in his mind, rather than on the page (Marcus 2000: 26). Although many of the revisions are in a different ink, indicating a lapse of time rather than an immediate amendment, the extent and nature of Fowler's drafting practice suggests that paper and pen operate as an intrinsic part of his cognitive processes. Through the production of material forms, revisited and revised over time, Fowler employs and internalises a prosthetic supplement to memory as storehouse and tool of literary composition (Sutton 2002). In doing so, Fowler's methodology resembles that of the Ramists, in exploring material and visible systems for structuring information that do not employ images, although the poet's avowed interest in emblems suggests that such practices do not necessarily preclude the use of other forms of the art of memory. A similar ordering impulse is reflected in the construction of 'The Tabill', a compendious index of first lines whose precise purpose is unknown, but which answers a parallel need for visible structuring devices, and reflects the established role of a text's opening or title as the starting point for memory work (Hawthornden MS XI. f. 253; Meikle I: 333-4; Verweij 2007: 18; Carruthers 2008: 109).

[19] Verweij's analysis of the manuscript context offers ample evidence of the *Tarantula*'s status as a coherent collection, and indicates that the same cannot be said of the other two groups of poems with which the *Tarantula* has been studied, *Of Death* and *A Sonnet Sequence*. *Of Death* is the more coherent of these two groupings of sonnets, but the female figure within this cycle is not named. *Of Death*'s status as a reworking of a Petrarchan narrative, as Dunnigan persuasively argues, may reflect a parallel literary project, rather

than a continuation of the *Tarantula*. Although the second grouping, *A Sonnet Sequence*, includes Bellisa sonnets, there is evidence to suggest that these were perhaps composed some twelve years later, and their relationship to the carefully planned *Tarantula* sequence is uncertain (Verweij 2007). The final sonnet of the *Tarantula* presents a compelling conclusion to the sequence and its exploration of the tensions at work in the convergence of memory, the erotic, and Protestantism, in a poetic prayer:

Lord quha redemes the deid and doth reviuie,
 and stumbling things preservs fra farder fall,
 quha mercyeis maks the sinfull saul to liue,
 and dothe to mynde na mair there guylt re[call],
 aboliss, lord, my faults baith great and smal,
 and my contempt and my offence efface;
 by thy sweit meiknes and thy mercy thral
 my stubborne thoughts, proud rebels to thy grace;
 In thy sones bloode my sins, great god, displace,
 and giue me words to cal vpon thy name.
 Lord in thy wonted kyndnes me embrace,
 that to this age I may these words procla[m]e:
 'as I IN ONE GOD EUER ay haith trust,
 so ar his promeis steadfast, trewe, and Iust.' (Meikle I. 207)

This final supplication presents a sacred counterpart to the erotic pleading of the secular love poetry, as the speaker once again offers up words of praise in the hope of obtaining embraces. Yet the desired embrace will not result in the reproduction of the speaker, either sexually or through textual circulation. It will not inscribe him in living memory. Instead, as Dunnigan argues, 'Spiritually, it must be a process of effacement and wilful forgetfulness' (Dunnigan 2002: 153). Longing to be encompassed by a divine amnesia that wipes out the memory of faults and quells troublesome thoughts, the speaker desires a union with God that entails a radical self-abnegation. The imperfections that characterise the inhabitants of a transient material world are to be swept away, as the art of memory gives way to the art of forgetting.

[20] Fowler's desire for the suppression of 'stubborne thoughts' is in this respect reminiscent of negative mysticism, which privileges active forgetfulness, resisting the imaginative capacity for image making, and cognition itself, as impediments to communion with an unknowable God (see Lochrie 1991: 30). In place of the mnemonic cues employed in the practice of affective piety, such as meditation on the body of Christ, in negative mysticism, as Karma Lochrie argues, 'Forgetfulness of all creation and resemblances, including the images which the imagination preserves as signposts for recollection, becomes the method of true contemplation' (Lochrie 1991: 30). The conclusion to Fowler's *Tarantula* aspires to a similar form of forgetfulness, in a movement that displaces the conception of poetry as a means to the fulfilment of the individual's erotic desires, articulated in the first sonnet of the sequence, and instead imagines the erasure of subjectivity, as the speaker becomes the mouthpiece of God. The problems posed by the ambiguity of images, and other signs whose inward conditions are not necessarily answerable to their outward beauty, can be resolved only through divine grace. If Fowler's imagined solution suggests a turn towards a form of internal iconoclasm, this necessarily remains an aspiration, associated with the spiritual resurrection that is predicated upon the death of the body. Although the speaker ultimately identifies his love of Bellisa as an idolatrous carnal desire, the success of his reorientation towards immortal love is a matter of faith: deprived of direct access to truth, he must take the risk of trusting in God, in a gesture that acknowledges his own dependence on the symbolic order.

Conclusion

[21] The emergence of more nuanced readings of Protestant attitudes to the visual in recent scholarship facilitates an analysis of the extent to which Fowler's *Tarantula* mediates and

responds to contemporary debates surrounding the affective qualities of images and their role in the art of memory. Yet, if Fowler's reputation as a mnemonist underlines the particular relevance of such controversies as contexts for the interpretation of his poetry, the interplay between Petrarchism, art, and the faculty of memory that this examination reveals suggests the value of a reassessment of the work of other sonneteers, and especially that of Philip Sidney. Sidney's contact with Brunian arts of memory, through his association with Dicson, and indicated by the dedication of works to Sidney by Bruno, has long been acknowledged; so too have his connections to Ramism via his secretary, William Temple, and in his role as the dedicatee of Ramist works such as Abraham Fraunce's *The Sheapheardes Logike* (Yates 1943; Yates 1966: 275-77; Durkan 1962; Cummings 2002: 256). Yates's influential analysis in *The Art of Memory* focused on the hostilities at work in the mnemonic conflict between Perkins and Dicson in 1584 in order to propose an opposition between Brunian and Ramist arts of memory. In doing so, it obscured the subtleties of the assimilation and adaptation of memory-training taking place within Protestant culture. In offering an exploration of the ambiguous position adopted by Fowler, this article suggests the need for a similar examination of attitudes to memory as mediated in Sidney's work. Renewed attention to this aspect of Sidney's work, and further exploration of attitudes to memory in other sonnet sequences, will also illuminate the role of Petrarchism in negotiating the tensions between memory and the erotic. I have suggested that the adaptations of the Canzoniere enacted within Bruno's furori and the Tarantula may be read as responses to Petrarch's fame as a master of the art of memory, and it is hoped that this article demonstrates the need for further work in this area, not only to gauge the influence of Petrarch's reputation as mnemonist on the reception of his poetry, but also to illuminate the extent to which Petrarch's poetry itself explores the relationship between memory and the erotic.[2]

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Notes

[1]National Library of Scotland, Hawthornden MSS, vol. XII, MS. 2046, f. 134r. The letter bears Fowler's signature, and the version given here is slightly expanded from that published in Verweij, based on my own reading of the manuscript (Verweij 2007: 13). [**back to text**]

[2]I would like to thank Dr. Sebastiaan Verweij for very kindly allowing me access to his unpublished dissertation, *'I am first in love as last in verse': A Revaluation of William Fowler's Tarantula of Love* (Vrije Universiteit, 2004). I also wish to thank the reviewer and several other readers for their comments and advice on earlier versions of this article; all remaining errors are, of course, my own. [**back to text**]

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